

June 10, 2004

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION  
Inquiry Into the Reduction of Public  
Safety Answering Points

ORDER AND FURTHER  
REQUEST FOR  
COMMENTS

WELCH, Chairman; DIAMOND and REISHUS, Commissioners

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## **I. SUMMARY**

In this Order, we describe Preliminary Criteria and a Plan for Reducing the Number of PSAPs. We seek comments from interested persons prior to opening a formal rulemaking proceeding.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

In the Spring of 2003, the Legislature enacted 25 M.R.S.A. § 2926. The new law directs the Emergency Services Communication Bureau (ESCB) (now within the Maine Public Utilities Commission) to reduce the number of Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) from 48 to between 16 and 24, to the extent possible.

In December 2003, the Commission contacted local elected officials, PSAP managers, fire chiefs, and police chiefs, as part of this Notice of Inquiry (NOI) process, seeking public input on how to implement this requirement. We received over 54 comments from municipalities and other entities. We also issued a request for voluntary PSAP consolidation, but received no positive responses.

Based on the comments received and other data acquired as part of this process,<sup>1</sup> this Order contains a preliminary plan for reducing the number of PSAPs.

## **III. PRELIMINARY CRITERIA AND PLAN FOR REDUCING NUMBER OF PSAPS**

### **A. Advantages of Consolidation**

As described below, consolidating PSAPs appears to have the potential to reduce costs at both the State and local level.

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<sup>1</sup> Further background information and recommendations from an independent consulting firm hired by ESCB can be found in the report of L. Robert Kimball and Associates, Public Safety Answering Point Consolidation Study, May 2004, which may be viewed online at the PUC Virtual Case File setting of the Commission's web page [www.maine.gov/mpuc](http://www.maine.gov/mpuc).

1. Local Level

Since the first PSAP activation over three and one half years ago, some communities have found that consolidation of both 9-1-1 call answering and dispatch of emergency services provides cost savings to the community. These dollars can contribute to citizen tax relief programs or other essential community efforts. To date, twelve communities have chosen the cost-benefit of consolidation.

In light of the capabilities of enhanced 9-1-1 technology, which provides the call taker/dispatcher with the address of the calling party, the calling party's telephone number, and the correct agency to dispatch for medical, fire, and police response, the public safety need for individual community dispatch has diminished. Moreover, it is common today for many communities to close the ambulance office, fire department office, and police department office after hours and on weekends. Through the use of technology, telephones can be located outside the offices that will automatically dial 9-1-1 for help. With the correct address in hand, the emergency responder can now locate the person and provide assistance in the shortest amount of time. Communities can overcome the initial funding associated with regionalization by pooling their current dispatch budgets.

For these reasons, in developing the consolidation proposal, the Commission has tentatively concluded that the most efficient and effective model for emergency call processing is a regional "full service" (call taking and dispatch) communications center. Where dispatch consolidation is not achieved, the Commission has tentatively concluded that using a two-step call transfer process to a "dispatch only" location (from the consolidated PSAP) is acceptable (though not ideal). Over 28 communities already employ such a two-step process.

2. State Level

The basic annual cost to the state system for a 2-position PSAP is approximately \$40,000 per year. A review of PSAP call volumes suggests that a substantial reduction in the total number of PSAPs would be cost effective. The reduction of PSAPs would result in cost savings to the state E9-1-1 system and thus reduce the need for any future increase in the E9-1-1 surcharge.

- B. Preliminary Criteria for Reduction

1. No more than one PSAP located in the same city or town will be funded by the ESCB.
2. Consolidation should occur where call volumes are low and another PSAP is available to accept calls.
3. Communities are encouraged to work towards full call answering and dispatch within a regional communications center.

4. Where there is only one PSAP within a county, that PSAP will remain activated unless legislative action, voluntary closure, or cost analysis determines otherwise.
5. Consolidation across county boundaries will be considered if requested.
6. Consolidations will take effect on or before October 17, 2005 (expiration of current Verizon contract). At that time, State E9-1-1 funding for equipment, training and maintenance will only be provided for the final designated PSAPs (expected to be 24 or fewer sites).

C. PSAPs not Currently under Consideration for Consolidation/Reduction

The following PSAPs are not currently under consideration for closure as they represent a single PSAP in a county.

1. Franklin County RCC
2. Hancock County RCC
3. Knox County RCC
4. Lincoln County 9-1-1 Communications
5. Oxford RCC
6. Piscataquis RCC
7. State Police Houlton RCC
8. Sagadahoc County 9-1-1
9. Somerset RCC
10. Washington RCC
11. Waldo RCC

D. PSAPs Expected to be consolidated

Due to low call volumes, we expect the following PSAPs to be consolidated (or State funding to be provided for only one site).

1. Bar Harbor to Hancock County RCC
2. Lisbon PD to Lewiston/Auburn 9-1-1 **or** Androscoggin Sheriff's Office

E. Regions Considered for Consolidation

The following list identifies suggested consolidations based on the Preliminary Criteria for Reduction listed above, ongoing call volumes, and the willingness of regional centers' to participate.

1. Central Maine Communications Center Region (one PSAP maximum)<sup>2</sup>
  - a. Maine State Police - Augusta RCC
  - b. Kennebec County Sheriff's Office
  - c. Augusta PD
  - d. Gardiner PD
  - e. Waterville PD
2. Androscoggin County Region (one PSAP maximum)
  - a. Androscoggin Sheriff's Office
  - b. Lewiston/Auburn 9-1-1
  - c. Lisbon PD
3. Cumberland County Region (four PSAP maximum)
  - a. Cumberland County Communications (willing to be a regional PSAP)
  - b. Brunswick PD
  - c. Cape Elizabeth PD
  - d. Cumberland PD
  - e. Falmouth PD
  - f. Freeport PD
  - g. Gorham PD
  - h. Maine State Police – Gray RCC
  - i. Portland PD
  - j. Scarborough PD
  - k. South Portland PD
  - l. Westbrook PD
  - m. Windham PD
  - n. Yarmouth PD
4. York County Region (three PSAP maximum)
  - a. York County (willing to be a regional PSAP and accept 8 PSAPs)
    - i. Kennebunk PD
    - ii. Kennebunkport PD
    - iii. Kittery PD
    - iv. Old Orchard Beach PD
    - v. Saco PD

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<sup>2</sup> See P.L. 2003, ch. 678, An Act Relating to the Establishment of a Central Maine Regional Public Safety Communication Center, effective July 30, 2004.

- vi. South Berwick PD
    - vii. Wells PD
    - viii. York PD
  - b. Biddeford PD
  - c. Sanford PD
5. Penobscot County Region (one PSAP maximum)
- a. Penobscot County RCC
  - b. Bangor PD
  - c. Maine State Police - Orono RCC

#### IV. PROCESS

Interested persons are invited to file comments on the Commission's preliminary views, as described above. Commenters may also suggest other ways to accomplish PSAP reductions.

Comments should be filed no later than July 12, 2004. Comments may be submitted electronically by going to the Commission web site [www.maine.gov/mpuc](http://www.maine.gov/mpuc) and following the electronic filing instructions. Persons may also mail comments to the Administrative Director, Maine Public Utilities Commission, 242 State Street, State House Station 18, Augusta, ME 04333. All comments will appear on the Virtual Case File section of the Commission's web site. Filings should refer to Docket No. 2003-859.

The Commission will notify all persons who file comments of any further activities in this inquiry and of any subsequent rulemaking.

Copies of this Notice will be mailed to all PSAPs, towns, County Commissioners, the Maine Municipal Association, and Maine's Police, Fire, and Sheriffs' Associations, and persons filing comments previously in this Docket.

Dated at Augusta, Maine, this 10<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2004.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION

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Dennis L. Keschl  
Administrative Director

COMMISSIONERS VOTING FOR:      Welch  
   Diamond  
   Reishus